



# DESE

## FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES



April 12, 2024

School Lunch Hero Day - May 3, 2024

# SCHOOL LUNCH HERO DAY

**Get Ready to Celebrate School Lunch Hero Day on May 3, 2024!  
#SLHD24**

On the first Friday in May, we celebrate School Lunch Hero Day! We would like to recognize the difference school food service team members make for every child who comes through their cafeteria.

Thank you for all the extra that goes into preparing healthy meals for Missouri students, adhering to regulatory guidelines and nutrition standards, navigating student preferences and food allergies, and the kindness you give with the service. School nutrition professionals are true heroes every school day!

School Lunch Hero Day provides the perfect opportunity to recognize the hardworking professionals in every school cafeteria around Missouri.

Whether you choose to use SNA's [printable activities](#), [official logos and artwork](#), [customizable press release](#), [official proclamation](#) or come up with your own ideas, your School Lunch Hero Day is sure to be a hit!

Don't forget to tag on social media by using **#SLHD24** so everyone can see all the fun!



### Feeding Missouri's Children Summer 2024



#### Seamless Summer Option (SSO)

The Seamless Summer Option Application (SSO) is now open. If you intend to serve meals via SSO, please complete the SSO Application in the DESE, Web Application System no later than May 1. If you have questions regarding the completion of your application, please reach out to your regional **Nutrition Program Specialist**.

#### Local Education Agency SSO Options for Summer 2024

- 1. Seamless Summer Option (SSO)** Buildings can qualify for Seamless Summer Option via the following options:
  - 1. Area Eligible** – Site was at least 50% free and reduced enrolled during the month of October 2023 (or any other month during the 23-24 SY)
  - 2. Attendance Area Eligible** – Site is located within the attendance area of a site that was determined area eligible
  - 3. Census Data Eligible** – Site is located in an area that is eligible or averaged eligible based on the [census map](#)
- 2. Operate National School Lunch Program (NSLP)** where enrolled students pay for meals based on free, reduced, and paid benefits and claims will receive the NSLP reimbursement rate.
- 3. Apply for Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)** provided through the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS). [SFSP vs SSO](#) is a good resource to determine which program will work best for your school.

Here is another resource to help you determine which program to use for summer school, provided by the USDA: **Seamless Summer and Other Options for Schools**. It breaks down each available program with guidance.

LEAs interested in operating non-congregate feeding through SSO should review the **Non-Congregate Feeding Seamless Summer Option Resource**. For additional information, see the section under the *Important School Nutrition Requirements and Resources* heading below.

#### **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**

The Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services (DHSS) would like to invite you to participate in an exciting and impactful program that brings nutritious meals to children during the summertime, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)! During the school year, many children receive free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch through the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs. What happens when school lets out? The SFSP was established to fill that nutrition gap and to ensure that children continue to receive nutritious meals when school is not in session. Free meals that meet Federal nutrition guidelines are provided to children 18 years old and under at approved SFSP sites.

You can find the 2024 [reimbursement rates](#), [SFSP Informational Flyer](#), and additional resources on the DHSS [Summer Food Service Program webpage](#). Please contact [sfsp@health.mo.gov](mailto:sfsp@health.mo.gov) if you have any questions.

### **Important School Nutrition Requirements and Resources**

#### **Annual Civil Rights Training**

All LEAs administering School Nutrition Programs are required to provide civil rights training for all frontline staff and supervisors who deal with School Nutrition Program applicants and participants. Examples include cooks, servers, cashiers, lunchroom supervisors, clerks and administrators. Staff must be trained at least one time per year and documentation of the training must be kept on file at the local level.

The [Civil Rights PowerPoint presentation](#) and [training documentation](#) are available on the [Civil Rights page](#) of the [Food and Nutrition Services website](#). Additional information concerning Civil Rights is also available on the site.

- **And Justice For All Posters** - Child Nutrition Program operators must be using the green poster, official name AD-475A. These 2019 posters should continue to be displayed until the 2022 poster is printed by USDA and shipped out to State Agencies. DESE no longer has any supply of green posters.

#### **USDA Releases Establishing the Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs Interim Final Rule: Comment Period Open**

USDA's goal across all [summer nutrition programs](#) is simple: connect children with nutritious food during the summer months to help them grow and thrive. The



Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 requires the Secretary of Agriculture to make available to States an option to provide summer meals for non-congregate meal service in rural areas with no congregate meal service.

## Supply Chain Assistance Funding for Schools

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service is making funding available for supply chain assistance. This funding is in response to the on-going challenges including higher food cost. These funds assist districts with supply chain disruptions and higher food cost. The Food and Nutrition Service office has received four (4) separate allocations of supply chain funding to provide Missouri districts participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). This funding will enhance efforts to strengthen local food supply chains, and help districts to overcome financial and operational barriers while maintaining children's access to nutritious meals.

Supply Chain Assistance funds can only be used to support direct purchasing of domestically grown, unprocessed or minimally processed food products for school meals. For guidance on frequently asked questions concerning the most recent allocation of funds, please review the Updated **Supply Chain Assistance (SCA) Frequently Asked Questions** document.

If you have questions concerning the amount of SCA funds your district has received for round 1, 2 and 3 allocations, please contact our office. The amount of round 4 SCA funds are listed in the preliminary list on the **Supply Chain Assistance LEA Lookup Tool**.

Note: Round 4 funds have been processed, however schools that contract with a Food Service Management Company, **must complete** a **Questionnaire** concerning receiving round 4 funds and sign an attestation statement to accept and/or deny round 4 funds **no later than May 17, 2024**.

## Paid Lunch Equity (PLE) Tool

The **Paid Lunch Equity tool and guidance** for the 2024-25 School Year is now available on our website.

For SY 2024-25, School Food Authorities (SFAs) with a positive or zero balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2023, are exempt from PLE pricing requirements found at **7 CFR 210.14(e)**. **If the SFA had a positive or zero balance in the non-profit school food service account as of June 30, 2023**, you must use **this link to elect to use the PLE exemption**.

While not required, exempt SFAs may still use the PLE tool to complete the steps necessary to determine their target SY 2024-25 paid lunch price, consistent with program regulations at **7 CFR 210.14(e)**, and adjust their paid lunch prices accordingly.

SFAs that had a negative balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2023, must follow PLE requirements according to **7 CFR 210.14(e)** when establishing their paid lunch prices for SY 2024-25. SFAs may use the SY 2024-25 PLE tool to determine their required paid lunch prices.

In the PLE tool, SFAs may use the prices they last charged students as the basis for their SY 2024-25 paid lunch price calculation, even if those prices were charged during a year the SFA was not required to comply with PLE requirements. For example, SFAs that were exempt based on the FY 2023 Appropriations Act may use prices charged during SY 2023-24 to determine their PLE requirement for SY 2024-25.

If an SFA did not charge for meals during SY 2023-24, such as an SFA that operated the Community Eligibility Provision, Provisions 2 or 3, or a non-pricing option and is returning to standard counting and claiming in SY 2024-25, it may use the most recent paid lunch price data as the basis for its SY 2024-25 paid lunch calculation. If an SFA is unable to find documentation of the last paid meal price charged to students, then it must follow FNS guidance for new schools found in **Guidance on Paid Lunch Equity and Revenue from Nonprogram Foods | Food and Nutrition Service (usda.gov)**.

Consistent with **7 CFR 210.14(e)(4)(i)**, SFAs are not required to raise their paid lunch price by more than 10 cents for SY 2024-25 from the last year they charged for paid lunches. SFAs can still choose to raise the price by more than 10 cents.

## Advocacy News

### Proposed Rules

Ensuring good nutrition for every child is an on-going process that involved Federal Legislation and Regulations. School Nutrition Program Director's are encouraged to educate their local and national representatives about the importance of supporting school meal programs. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has proposed updates to the school nutrition standards in a few key areas. If passed, **these new rules** could be phased in to effect starting in school year 2024-2025.

### Missouri School Meals Act

Locally, Missouri has a proposed bill SB 1154 (3173.01S), **Missouri School Meals Act**. Contact your local congress representatives and educate them on why this Act matters and how it effects their local school district. Recently our Dietetic Interns from Logan University developed this **School Meals Legislation Support form**. This form may be used by Food Service Director's to help communicate and promote their school meals program with their local legislative representatives.

This act establishes the "Missouri School Meals Act". Under the act, schools shall provide a free lunch to students who qualify for reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program. Subject to appropriation, the State Board of Education shall reimburse schools for their share of the cost of providing free lunches to students who qualify for reduced-price lunch. A school shall determine which students may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program and shall provide information and assistance to parents and guardians for purposes of filling out applications

for such Program. Schools shall not publicly identify or stigmatize students who are eligible for such assistance.

This act creates the "School Meals Fund", which shall be used to reimburse schools for the costs of providing free lunches to students who qualify for reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program. The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules to implement the program, including the process by which schools may apply for reimbursement.

### **School Nutrition Association**

Another great resource to stay up to date is being a member with the School Nutrition Association (SNA) and the Missouri School Nutrition Association. These organizations help educate, lead and advocate for the health and wellbeing of the Child Nutrition Programs. SNA released its 2024 Position Paper outlining this year's legislative priorities. SNA is calling on Congress to help resolve the procurement and regulatory issues that are becoming long-term challenges for school meal programs. Congress is being urged to increase funding, preserve successful current nutrition standards and provide every student equal access to healthy school meals.

## **Reminders and Important Information**

### **Summer Workshops 2024**

Summer Workshops 2024 will be held in Springfield, MO - July 31 – August 2.

- July 31 – Food Service Directors – New Hire
- August 1 – All Food Service Directors
- August 2 – Cooks and Kitchen Staff

### ***Registration COMING SOON!***

### **CEP Reminder**

LEAs interested in electing Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for some or all schools must prepare data on the number of identified students eligible for free meals based on Direct Certification (including Homeless, Foster, and Extended Eligible) and enrollment data as of April 1 to determine eligibility and participate in CEP.

The **Final Rule** published on September 26, 2023, which lowered the minimum identified student percentage required to elect CEP from 40% to 25%.

### **Last Call: Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants!**

Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) and USDA are recognizing and celebrating school food authorities who have made operational changes to improve the nutritional quality of their school meals, as well as those who engage students and families in nutrition education and school meals. If you've made changes to your school recipes and menus or engaged students in menu planning and nutrition education, you may qualify for a **Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award!** Apply now!

You can find more information on **[current grant opportunities here](#)**.

### **Food Service Management Company (FSMC) Final Contract Year Info**

For those in the 5th and FINAL year of their contract with their FSMC, new bids must go out very soon so that they can get approved and advertised for the mandatory 45-60 days.

The contracts must be approved and signed by DESE before July 1. LEA's must use the Request for Proposal (RFP) that we provide. The RFP and the advertisement must be sent in to DESE and approved to get the process started. Please contact [Kyle Heislen](#) at (573) 522-9849 to get the RFP or if you have any questions. This must be completed ASAP.

## Farm to School

The **Local Food for Schools (LFS) grant** is still open. The application is an easy 3 step process to apply.

1. Watch the [training video](#)
2. Then complete the [application survey](#)
3. Finally submit a [written plan](#) explaining how you plan to use the funds to purchase local foods for school meals



## USDA Foods Update

### **Bonus Fresh Apples** – 110151 Various Varieties, 37-40# case, 125 servings

Don't miss taking advantage of these FREE cases of apples that will be available for September 2024 delivery! Refrigerate them and be ready for **Apple Crunch October!** No request is too big or too small for us to fill. Reach out today and request apples for your entire district at [donatedfoods@dese.mo.gov](mailto:donatedfoods@dese.mo.gov).

**Direct Delivery (Brown Box) Bonus** - DESE bonus foods will continue to be available through the end of April. Districts interested in selecting 50 or more cases of Bonus items during April may qualify for a special delivery of these items in May. Please contact your USDA Foods Team at [donatedfoods@dese.mo.gov](mailto:donatedfoods@dese.mo.gov) if interested in this bonus delivery option.

### **Gold Star Live Inventory End of Year Deliveries**

As a friendly reminder, all Direct Delivery (Brown Box) and Fee For Service foods that have been processed for the 23/24 school year, must be received during the 23/24 school year. **April is our last scheduled warehouse delivery month, so product remaining in your Gold Star account will automatically be shipped to you in April if you do not place it on your Gold Star order.** Please make arrangements to assure you will be able to accept all items you have processed.

### **Net Off Invoice Pounds**

We are now into April and districts that have processed Net Off Invoice should have utilized more than 75% of pounds processed. Districts that have not reached this level of use will be receiving an inquiry from your processors asking if you have a plan to utilize your remaining pounds before the end of the school year.

Districts with a plan may keep their pounds and continue to draw them down. Districts that do not respond to the processors or that do not have a plan may have their pounds

swept into the state account to take them to the 65% usage level. Please note that all pounds left unused on June 30th will be swept into the State bank.

**DOD Usage in Summer School** - As a reminder, districts that operate the Seamless Summer or National School Lunch programs during June can continue using their DOD funds. Districts that operate a Summer Food Service Program are not eligible to use DOD funds for summer feeding.

## Past Newsletters

Missed a past newsletter or need to access them again? You can find them all on our Food and Nutrition Services Newsletter page!



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